

Successful Intern Management: A Guide for Intern Managers

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

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May 2018

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2018

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Undergrad
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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to provide managers with additional tools for incoming interns. The issue addresses the gap present between the formal intern onboarding process, and when the student employee is integrated into the team culture and dynamic. This guidebook introduces the reader to three categories prevalent to managers in a professional environment: interns and internship programs, how to maximize the intern experience, and common pitfalls and best practices. The paper provides research-based claims in an easy to read format to best inform the intended reader of a current or prospect intern manager.

Acknowledgments

A special thank you to Dr. Tamara Montag-Smit for helping me find a thesis topic that was of interest to me, providing feedback throughout the semester, and working closely with me to formulate a finished product. Another huge thank you to Professor Carla Flores for serving as a secondary advisor of sorts and providing me with her experiences working in HR. Thank you also to my peer students and the faculty and staff in the Department of Management for providing support and encouragement throughout the culmination of this guide.

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Process Analysis Statement

After a summer-long human resources internship in 2017, I found that my interests within HR really geared toward the training and development area. I had the opportunity to create a guide-like book during my employment, and thoroughly enjoyed the process of putting together materials that can bring value to an organization. I knew that from my experiences as an intern, there were things to be improved, but also aspects that could be beneficial to other organizations as they began or continued their internship programs. The idea of creating a guide for an intern manager was an idea I felt very strongly about, as I see integrating new employees into the current culture as an important aspect of the orientation and employment process.

When I first began putting together this thesis, my mind was flooded with ideas on how to approach the topic. I knew that I wanted this guide to be somewhat linear in progression so that it made sense to the reader, but also functional for managers that were looking to read only bits and pieces at a time. It was also important to me that the guide be easy to read, with the text broken up. I saw it best to be laid out in chapter format, with three major sections detailing the aspects of internship programs considered most important.

I discovered throughout the creation process, that I work best with linear timelines, and that this idea of sectioning the work into functional areas was a stretch for me mentally, but made the most sense for the final product. I encountered the challenge of determining what the voice of the guide should be. While trying to stray away from monotone textbook speak, I feared writing too informally. Through feedback from my advisor, I was encouraged to embrace my natural writing style, and push myself out of my comfort zone when it came to research and ideas.

Throughout the formulation of this project, I was able to talk with my advisors as a HR professional. Having the opportunity to engage in research, think creatively about my own experiences, and put my ideas into a valuable piece of writing allowed me to enhance my critical thinking skills and communicate more effectively with others through written communication channels.

Part I: Introduction to Interns

What is an intern?

An intern is typically a student worker that is currently completing or has recently completed high school or college education. Interns work in both unpaid and paid positions in a variety of career fields (check current wage law to make sure you are within the guidelines). For the purpose of this guide, we will be focusing in on interns in a professional setting.

Professional interns have the unique opportunity to work within an organization for a specified amount of time (usually 8-12 weeks), and are given the chance to learn more about their respective career paths as well as survey companies for further employment opportunities.

Typically internships begin with the end goal of developing the student worker. There are many schools of thought about what worker development may look like. Depending on the organization size, resources and culture, interns will be given varying experiences, but the baseline should include items such as networking, training, decision-making, interpersonal communication, and a mentor/mentee relationship.

Although interns are expected to contribute quality work to an organization just as a full-time employee would, interns are different from traditional organizational employees. Almost every internship program requires the student worker to meet some defined learning objective, making the role different from that of an entry-level employee. Interns are specifically working for an organization with the goal of obtaining professional, real-life experience through the application of classroom knowledge. The focus on a specific learning objective separates an intern's purpose and experience from that of a part-time or volunteer worker (*Internships vs. Part Time Work*, 2010).

Advantages of an Internship Program

When facilitated correctly, an internship program can provide a multitude of benefits to both your organization and the student worker. By working with interns, your company will have the opportunity to locate future full-time employees that could be integrated into the team, get a better look at a candidate during a prolonged "interview," and increase organizational productivity (*10 Benefits of Starting*, 2010). Full-time employees will gain experience as a mentor or manager while benefiting from the ideas of someone new. Not to mention your organization could gain a free brand ambassador once your intern returns to school.

Internships are also extremely valuable for the interns themselves. Having the opportunity to gain professional experience working alongside employees working in the roles they aspire to allows the intern to set a clear career path and create goals (Huhman, 2011). If there are potential full-time employment opportunities with an organization, an internship is a great way to “test drive” the company to see how it fits. Even if the organization ends up being a wrong fit long-term, the student has the opportunity to meet peers with similar professional interests, apply classroom knowledge in a real-world setting, and develop transferable skills that will add value to the individual going forward. See table 1 below to help exemplify how advantageous an internship is to both the business and the intern.

Table 1: Advantages of an Internship Program

For Businesses	For Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Locate future employees ● Increase organizational productivity ● Prolonged “interview process” ● New perspective on organizational issues ● Gain advocates for the company brand ● Provide current employees with management and development experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity to apply classroom knowledge ● Build a professional network ● “Test drive” a company ● Meet peers with similar interests ● Confirm career path ● Obtain references for future jobs ● Gain valuable work experience ● Develop transferable skills

Once your intern has arrived, you are ready to bring the whole team together and dive into your role as onboarding manager. Review the “Needs Assessment Checklist for Managers” to ensure you are fully prepared.

Needs Assessment Checklist for Managers

Managing interns for the first time is a different managerial experience. Your organization has decided to put in place an internship program to help meet company objectives. By considering answers to the questions below, you will have a better understanding of what is needed to accomplish the goals of the internship program, and what the interns will be gaining from it.

To get a feel for what a new employee experience looks like at your organization, you may find that polling coworkers on the following questions helps get the process started (*Improving Training Programs with Feedback*, 2013).

- What part of the onboarding experience did you find to be most helpful when you joined our organization?

- What did you find to be the most challenging when you began your role?
- What advice would you give to an intern or new employee joining our organization?
- What tools and resources have been of the most help to you?
- Who was your “go-to” person when you were starting out in your role?
- How can we improve the new employee experience within our organization?

An organization’s goals and business strategy should be influential in the content and facilitation of your internship program. It is important to evaluate whether or not the program aligns with the strategic goals of the organization. Through the onboarding of interns, several outcomes should be considered in order to ensure this alignment to overarching goals (Noe, 2017). Consider the following list of questions when developing/updating an internship program or preparing for an intern class.

- What are the goals of the internship program?
 - What is the program looking to accomplish?
- What is the value of effectively onboarding the interns?
 - Will it save your organization money in the long run?
 - Does it produce better quality work/employees?
- What should the interns learn throughout their time with the organization?
 - What is their takeaway?
- What is the organization looking to gain from employing professional interns?
- How will we gauge the success of the internship program?
 - Larger pool of full-time applicants
 - Increased productivity/sales
 - Completion of stagnant projects/work
 - Providing managerial experience for lower-level or first-time managers
 - Creation of brand ambassadors for the organization once the interns depart
- How can we ensure the interns view the organization in a positive light?
- Can employing interns help achieve organizational objectives?

Preparing for the Intern(s)

Believe it or not, your role in facilitating an enjoyable intern experience starts before they even come through the door. Below is a checklist of things to review as you prepare yourself and your team for the intern’s arrival (*6 Tips for Making Interns*, 2010).

- **Discuss the intern’s presence with your team.** Explain that the intern is here to gain professional experience and develop his/her skills, not to take an existing team member’s role. Clarifying the purpose of the intern can lessen the competitive feel of the environment and help create a more cohesive team once the intern has arrived.

- **Create an intern work plan.** Decide what the intern will be doing once he/she arrives. A work plan can help set clear expectations of what needs to be completed and gives the intern more meaningful work than just simply grabbing coffee for the team. A work plan should include items like the intern's main project, any additional projects or assignments to be completed, objectives to work toward, and goals to achieve throughout the summer. For instance, if the intern has a goal of learning more about the internal recruitment process, assigning a small project over recruiting within your department, or job shadowing a human resources professional in your organization would be appropriate action items to include.
- **Plan a welcome lunch.** Chances are, your intern will be nervous to start this new employment. By taking him/her out to a casual meal without the pressure of the professional environment, you get the chance to get to know the intern's interests and personality.
- **Provide a functional work space.** When the intern is introduced to his/her work space, all necessary elements should be present and in working order. Consider whether or not the intern needs a computer, phone or office supplies, and whether or not the company will be providing these.
- **Start thinking of a mentor, other than yourself.** Once the intern arrives, he/she may gravitate toward one person in your team to ask questions and get guidance. However, be sure that the mentor is the right fit for the intern to gain the most out of the experience. Think about which member(s) on your team might play this role well, and discuss amongst yourselves to sort this out prior to the internship start date.
- **Explain what you need from your team.** To be sure that the intern feels included and has a successful integration, request that your team members make the initial contact with the intern to introduce themselves, provide answers to questions, and become familiar faces around the workplace.

Part II: Maximizing the Intern Experience

Programming for Interns

Programming and team building activities have a meaningful place in existing work teams, but are especially helpful when incorporating a new employee. Interns are a great reason to reevaluate the team dynamic that exists, clarify expectations of each team member, begin or

strengthen relationships, and establish group norms. Types of programming needs can vary based on industry or team circumstances, but are almost always necessary in some capacity. Programs for interns may include, but are not limited to: additional onboarding practices, the establishment of a mentor/mentee program, and clarification of team norms and expectations.

Onboarding

What is onboarding?

Onboarding is a process created to introduce new employees to the company they will be working for by showcasing the mission, vision and values the company has chosen to represent. In addition to learning about the history and future plans of the organization, the new hire has the opportunity to begin to learn the company structure and complete the orientation process.

Facilitation of the onboarding process varies between organizations, lasting anywhere from a day to months. The formality, length and approach to onboarding is company specific and is dependent upon culture and available resources.

Newly hired employees are offered the chance to gain understanding into the most asked question: “What is expected of me?” Addressing this early is a key component for companies moving forward, and should be continued once the new employee is introduced to his/her manager and team.

In summary, a typical onboarding process includes the following components. Quality of facilitation of the list below is the distinguishing factor between fair and superb onboarding processes (*Managing the Employee Onboarding*, 2017). For more information on questions the intern may have, reference the General Best Practices portion of this guide.

- Mission, vision and values of the organization.
- Organizational culture.
- Organizational chart.
- Directory.
- Tour of facility.
- Legal and policy review/orientation
- Form I-9.
- Personal information sheet.
- Tax withholding.
- Policies (e.g., anti-harassment, nondiscrimination, e-mail, dress code, telephone) and/or employee handbook.

- Security information.

Below are a list of topics that may not apply to intern employees, but could be relevant depending on your organization (*Managing the Employee Onboarding*, 2017). It is important to note the additional topics you may need to cover when converting an intern to a full-time employee position after the internship is complete. A more comprehensive list can be composed by yourself and your organization's human resources department.

- Benefits enrollment.
- Employment at will.
- Noncompetition agreement.
- Vacation.

Value of Onboarding

Onboarding is a valuable process for employees, and should be geared toward meeting organizational goals. A successful onboarding experience provides the incoming employee with developmental knowledge of the role as he/she learns more about how the position relates to overall organizational goals. Educating employees up front can lessen the impact and frequency of mistakes in the future.

An effective onboarding process can also help mitigate the amount of turnover that your organization will encounter; about 15 percent per year (Campanella, 2014). By showing the employees from the beginning that the organization values their presence, they will feel more comfortable within the business and are less likely to search outside for other employment opportunities (Campanella, 2014). Reducing turnover is not only good for employee morale, but also benefits the organization, as replacing an entry-level employee can cost on average 30-50 percent of that person's annual salary (Campanella, 2014).

Overall, the onboarding experience can bring value to both the employer and the employee joining the organization. By showing this value to incoming interns, your organization will be showcasing its educational talents, proficient HR abilities, and creating an environment that new employees will aspire to work long-term.

Interns should participate in the onboarding process as traditional employees would. Although some topics covered in full-time onboarding will be excluded from an intern experience as mentioned previously, allowing the student to get a glimpse into the company background is beneficial. Interns are generally eager to learn, and are looking to gain a real-world professional experience from their internship. By providing them with a customized onboarding experience, the interns will begin to understand early on what their role is within the organization, the level

of work expected from them, and what resources are available to them throughout their internship.

Onboarding Interns

In most cases, interns will be onboarded in a similar fashion to new full-time employees. As mentioned before, the onboarding process is dependent on many factors such as: resources, time, company size and organizational culture.

Although the initial onboarding process will, in most cases, be conducted by the HR onboarding team, managers have a duty to contribute to the intern integration process. Creating an effective transition is important for all employees, but imperative for interns since these workers will be employed for a temporary period of time.

Onboarding: Roles and Responsibilities

It is unlikely that all departments or employees that the new hire will work with are present at the initial onboarding session. However, it is more than the role of the human resources professional to acclimate the employee to the new work environment. Although each organization will have a unique way to divide onboarding duties between employees and departments, below are the suggested guidelines (SHRM, 2017).

- **HR department:** Employee paperwork (e.g., forms, benefits), work hours, history and background of the organization, review of the organizational chart, tour of the facility
- **Training department:** Delivery of the onboarding program elements; lectures and discussions about organizational culture, goals and objectives; review of company videos
- **Supervisor:** Duties and responsibilities; work behaviors, standards and expectations; introductions to fellow team members and other members of the organization; tour of the department; review of other roles and relationships within the department
- **Co-workers:** How the group works as a team, how to get things done, how to find/requisition tools and equipment
- **Executive team:** Mission, vision and values; strategic goals and objectives of the organization; high-level review of roles and responsibilities; description of organizational culture

- **Mentor/buddy:** Introductions to fellow team members and others within the organization, review of informal rules and policies, answers to day-to-day questions

Mentor/Mentee Program

A mentor/mentee relationship can be very influential in the success of any new worker, but especially with interns. Since interns are employed by the organization for such a short, defined amount of time, utilizing a mentor can provide benefits for not only the intern's professional development, but also the managerial development of lower-level managers and the organization as a whole, as described below in Table 2.

Table 2: Benefits of a Mentorship Program

For the mentor	For the student	For the organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contribute to the professional development of a student ● Identify a potential returning intern or new hire for the organization ● Give back to their field of work ● Gain management experience ● Expand their network and leadership impact ● Learn from the mentee (frequently regarding new technology in the workplace) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore the “world of work” by engaging with a professional in their desired field ● Talk with a professional about how text book information applies to real job situations ● Identify long-term professional goals ● Realize the value of networking ● Develop a meaningful professional relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allows supervisors to seek out high potential managerial candidates ● Increases overall employee job satisfaction, reducing turnover ● Shows the company cares about employee development ● Can create brand ambassadors in interns upon their departure

Stages of a Mentorship Program

The role of a mentor is to assist with the professional development of their mentee, as well as a support system. The ideal intern mentor would be an employee that is experienced enough to give reliable, valuable information, but still looking for developmental experience themselves. A mentor has the opportunity to develop professionally through managing another employee, the intern in this case. It is important to recognize that all mentor/mentee relationships will be unique. One mentee may require more or less supervision and support than another, and mentors

vary based on experiences and knowledge. Mentoring can be expressed in a formal setting facilitated by the organization, or ones that are more informal and develop spontaneously. However, for the purpose of establishing a mentoring program for interns, it is suggested that the program be facilitated by your organization, addressing clearly developed objectives. In general, there are four stages to a mentoring process, shown below (American Psychological Association, 2018).

- **Stage 1: Initiation**

- During the initiation stage, the two employees enter the mentoring relationship. Mentor candidates should be employees that are viewed as admirable and good role models. The ideal mentee is coachable, but talented and willing to learn. The initiation stage can be begun through a simple introduction, casual or working lunch, or even pairing together on a small project to get started.

- **Stage 2: Cultivation**

- After completing the initiation stage of a mentoring program, the cultivation stage is entered. Cultivation is known as the “primary stage of learning and development” (American Psychological Association, 2018). Assuming the cultivation is successful, both the mentee and mentor should gain from the experience. Mentees learn information and lessons based upon the mentor’s experiences, and the mentor can gain knowledge about new technologies or upcoming trends in the field. (American Psychological Association, 2018).

- **Stage 3: Separation**

- The third phase of the mentorship is characterized as the separation stage. At this point, the mentorship is ready to come to an end. There are many reasons why a mentorship may come to an end, and may seem natural or abrupt. Generally, mentorships are “complete” when there is nothing left for the involved parties to learn, the mentee wishes for more independence, or the mentor is giving the mentee more space like a parent would a child (American Psychological Association, 2018). Endings of a mentorship program can be tricky, especially if the end is abrupt or not mutual. Mentors can feel a sense of betrayal since they are not needed any longer, so make sure that both your intern and your employee acting as the mentor have a common understanding of what the finale of the program will be like from the beginning.

- **Step 4: Redefinition**

- At this point, both the mentor and mentee are aware that while their relationship can continue, it will not be exactly the same as it may have once been. How the relationship is redefined depends largely on the outcome of the third stage,

separation. If the parties end on amicable terms, the intern and employee may feel comfortable staying in touch professionally, or even maintaining a friendship. At this point, the mentor may take on a new mentee, and the original mentee is better prepared to become a mentor in the future.

Designing Your Own Program

Now that you are familiar with the stages that almost all mentorships follow, you can follow the guidelines below to develop a program of your own. Remember, all mentorship programs will be unique, but the basis remains the same (Chronus, n.d.).

• Step 1: Design the Program

- The design phase of program development is an optimal time to consider why you are establishing a mentorship program. Since the objective of this program is to aid in the internship process, dig a step further and consider what you want the mentor to get out of it? The mentee? Be able to define what a successful mentor/mentee relationship looks like for your organization. To do this, it is important to know what your target audience looks like, and who you are trying to bring into the mentor/mentee relationship. Have a good number of mentor candidates lined up to pair with incoming interns, and create a program that is customized to your workforce.
- Mentorship programs require a good balance between flexibility or adaptation and structure. Flexibility allows for all relationships to be whatever the participants need them to be, while structure provides a starting point and an end goal to work toward.
- Some key design components come from answering the following questions:
 - How does the mentor/mentee relationship begin?
 - Clarify how and when mentors will reach out to interns, to initiate the relationship.
 - What style of mentoring are you hoping for in your organization?
 - Be clear with your employees prior to the arrival of the interns.
 - What type of connection will the program provide? (1 on 1 meetings, group project etc.)
 - Will the mentor/mentee relationship last the entirety of the internship or only a portion?
 - What should be accomplished during the duration of the relationship?
 - What aspects outside of the formal mentoring relationship might need to be included?
 - Are the mentor and mentee encouraged to keep in contact upon the completion of the internship?

- If organizing a mentor program for a large cohort of interns, investing in mentoring software may be beneficial to the organization. Of course, this comes at a cost, and by no means is necessary for success.

- **Step 2: Attract the Talent**

- After the program is designed, it is important that there are both mentors and mentees to participate in it. While the idea of a mentoring program is exciting for many employees, you will need to convince them that serving as a mentor is worth both their effort and time.
- Consider how you as the intern manager may be able to contribute to the success of the program by lowering the stress of the mentor. Be creative in finding new ways for the mentor to complete work efficiently, leaving time to be a present and engaging mentor.
- Once you have established a base of mentor candidates, be sure that the mentors are aware of their own needs for professional development. By setting goals early on, the mentors can feel more prepared and provide an example to their mentee on what professional development and career goals look like.

- **Step 3: Make the Connections**

- Matching mentors and mentees is arguably the most difficult step in the creation of a mentoring program. While it is preferred that your participants bring a wide variety of experiences, personalities, and knowledge levels, this can complicate the pairing process.
- To make an educated match, both employees and interns should complete a profile. The most important topic to include for an internship mentoring program is professional development goals. Profile creation streamlines the process for both self and administrative pairing. When goals are easily accessible for both the mentor and mentee, accountability is increased, and goals are accomplished more frequently.

- **Step 4: Serve as a Guide**

- Although you as intern manager will not be directly involved in each mentoring relationship, part of your role is now to guide the pairings and help them be successful.
- First, ensure that each mentor and mentee pair has taken the time to create action plans and set goals for the duration of their relationship. Once those are established, you can help facilitate the creation of checkpoints and milestone dates that goals should be completed by. A large chunk of your role is holding both the mentor and mentee accountable for the relationship and their success. If your

organization chooses to formally track the details of the mentoring relationship, be sure to equip your mentor with all the necessary tools to do so.

- As the mentoring relationship comes to an end, help provide one or more opportunities for the mentor and mentee to reflect upon the experience. Discussing what was learned, the high points, and areas for improvement only can strengthen your organization's program moving forward. Discussion among mentor/mentee pairs can be especially helpful in identifying both positive and negative trends to address moving in future pairings.

- **Step 5: Measure the Program**

- At the finale of the mentorship, it is necessary to evaluate the success of the program. Have rich conversations with both mentors and mentees to gain feedback on the opportunities and obstacles faced within the duration of the relationship. Be sure to ask about the overall experience as well as define details that your organization values that can be enhanced or better organized. Drafting a survey with a standardized set of questions ensures consistency in participant answer, and aids in the tracking of statistics related to the program.
- Depending on your organization's goals for the overall internship program, measuring the mentorship process may not be feasible or logical. Measuring the success of the intern mentoring program can serve as a good practice run for when you measure the program for your full-time employees, as well as providing insights into how the experience could be improved for future interns.

Team Norms/Expectations

One of the most important aspects of a team is the set of rules and expectations established by its members. When referring to interns, the term "team" is defined as the group the intern will be participating in on a daily basis. For instance, if your intern is working in the HR department, team members should include the intern manager, and any additional HR personnel that work within the department. The definition of team may differ depending on how your organization is structured, but should generally be seen on a departmental basis.

"How a team makes decisions, assigns work, and holds members accountable determines whether or not the team is successful" (Heathfield, 2018). When introducing team norms to your team, be sure to explain why you are discussing the topic. Putting the responsibility on the entire team and allowing them to hold one another accountable for the team's success is the main priority. All members of the team must be present for the establishment of team norms, or the meeting should be rescheduled. You cannot successfully incorporate the needs of all team members if only some are in attendance. You as the manager have the option to facilitate the meeting, or could pull in a Human Resources representative from your organization to help out if

applicable (Heathfield, 2016). Like mentioned before, all teams will need something different, so trust your knowledge of your team to make an informed decision on how to best facilitate the initial meeting.

Team norms and expectations will appear different for each team, but there are some basic ground rules to make sure to include (*Creating Norms*, 2013). Consider the topics below when establishing team norms for your newly integrated intern team.

- **Time**
 - When do we meet?
 - Will we have a start time? An end time?
 - Will we begin and end on time?
- **Listening**
 - How will we encourage listening of others?
 - How do we discourage others from interrupting?
- **Confidentiality**
 - Will all meetings be open for the intern to attend?
 - What topics discussed in the meeting will be kept confidential within the group? /With the knowledge of the intern?
 - What topics are okay to discuss outside of meeting times with/without the intern?
 - How can the organization ensure protection of employee information through the use of thoughtful confidentiality?
- **Decision-making**
 - How will we make decisions as a group?
 - Do we serve as a decision-making or advisory body?
 - How will we reach a consensus as a team?
- **Participation**
 - How will we encourage everyone to participate?
 - Will we have a policy on attendance?
- **Expectations**
 - What will we expect from one another as team members?
 - Are there requirements for participation in this team?

Once discussing the questions and topics above, put the team norms into writing for all team members to view and revisit. Be sure to make affirmative statements such as “We will utilize an attendance policy for our members stating that no more than 1 meeting per month may be missed by any one person”. By stating the rules and expectations of one another explicitly, members should have clarity on what is and is not acceptable within this specific team.

Performance Feedback and Review

Evaluating an intern may come easier or more difficult to you as manager. The intern has only been employed with your organization for a short period of time, but you may want to think about next steps for them within your company. It is best to utilize your organization's method of performance appraisal to evaluate the intern's work. This can make the process less stressful for you as a manager since you should be familiar with it, and also give the intern a realistic view of what it means to work within your organization come performance-evaluation time. With that being said, your intern will be a different type of employee than you are used to. Here are some things to remember about your intern(s) (Nica, 2016).

- They are (most likely) just beginning their career, and will make a lot of mistakes
- Since they are making mistakes, you'll have to deliver negative feedback
- They are ambitious and career-driven
- They need constant feedback

Your intern will make mistakes and require a lot of feedback. Do not wait until the end of the internship to let him/her know that something has been done incorrectly. If your intern is getting no feedback in either direction, he/she will feel confused and wonder if the job is being done sufficiently. On the other hand, don't be afraid to praise your interns and let them know what they are doing right. Getting to an appropriate balance of positive and negative feedback can be tough, but reviewing the feedback delivery tips below can help mitigate the stress (Nica, 2016).

- **Be honest and authentic with your intern.** Be sure that your intern never has to wonder what you think of their work or them as an employee in your organization. Providing straightforward and frequent feedback helps the intern feel guided and supported throughout the terms of employment.
- **You are influencing their career decisions.** While it is important that you are honest with your intern, make sure to have a filter. Many interns have reported that their manager's feedback made them feel as though they cannot do anything right, and you have an opportunity to make or break their self-confidence. Your intern will value your opinion, and it could influence their decision to remain with your organization beyond the internship.
- **Make the session a dialogue.** When receiving feedback, everyone deserves to comment on their own performance. Be sure to make the meeting a two-way street, especially when working with those that may be underperforming. By having a conversation about the quality of work, both you and your intern can discuss the root of the problem, and potentially uncover an issue that is affecting more team members.

- **Focus on facts, not emotions.** It can be easy for your intern to perceive that you are not giving them positive feedback because you do not like them as a person. Focusing your conversation on concrete facts and situations that have occurred help mitigate this thought process. Come into the performance feedback session with actions and results in mind, and open up the conversation to be a collaboration with the intern.
- **Let the intern be a part of the solution.** In order to keep your intern from feeling like a solution has been imposed upon them, include the intern in on the process. Changing a negative behavior can be a difficult task, so challenge the intern to come up with a solution that is realistic and effective for the problem at hand.
- **Utilize your resources.** If your organization is heavy on instant communication technology, don't be afraid to use it as a platform for delivering small bursts of feedback. Some people prefer to receive feedback face-to-face, while others may associate this with feelings of stress and discomfort. However, it is recommended that negative feedback be delivered in a face-to-face meeting. Try balancing weekly or bi-weekly meetings with electronic communication through instant message or email. This can help mitigate the worry around overscheduling yourself, and also efficiently deliver short and concise messages to your intern that can better the performance of your team.

Offboarding and the Exit Interview Process

Your intern has completed the internship. But before he/she can leave your organization, the offboarding process must be completed. The offboarding process allows for a fluid transition for both the company and the intern(s). Openview Labs' Senior Talent Manager Meghan Maher outlines few points to consider below.

- **Confirm the intern's final day of work.** Know when your intern is leaving your team, and begin to prepare a transition for any projects that may be in progress or recently completed. It is important to know who will be taking over unfinished work, and what employees will take possession of completed projects.
- **Consider future employment.** If your intern was an exceptional employee, you may consider employing them in a number of ways. An intern can stay on part-time as a brand ambassador to spread word of mouth about the organization to others on his/her college campus, potentially bringing in new interns. You also may be considering employing your intern as a full-time employee. Be sure to communicate with all members of your team and HR when to develop a position and ensure your organization has the appropriate resources for an additional member.

- **Evaluate once more, and perform an exit interview.** Allow the intern and those that interacted heavily with them to complete evaluations and provide notes. By giving the intern concrete suggestions, he/she has the opportunity to develop professionally. Be sure to request suggestions and comments from your intern as well. Feedback given by the intern about the program and experiences helps tailor the internship to be more valuable for future students.
- **Be available for future contact.** Whether your intern was exceptional or just alright, be sure to mention whether or not you are available for them to contact. Let the intern know if you would be willing to write a letter of recommendation or could be used as a reference for future employment. Maintain a positive relationship with even average-level interns because having connections with student-level employees benefits the company and those employees to come.
- **End on a good note.** Just like you wanted to start the internship off on a good note, you'll want to end there as well. Your intern should leave feeling accomplished and like a contributor toward the organization's success. If deemed appropriate, plan a farewell lunch or small event to let the intern know he/she was appreciated for the time they spent with the company.

Part III: Common Pitfalls and General Best Practices

Common Pitfalls

Managing an intern or set of interns can be a daunting task if you are not used to it. As a first time intern manager, you will make mistakes. Chances are, your student will have their first or only intern experience with you and your organization. Below is a list of common mistakes that managers of interns make, and how to avoid them (Margulies, 2017).

- **Not asking interns what they hope to gain from the experience.** It is impossible to best guide your intern unless you are knowledgeable about what he/she is hoping to gain from the experience. Create a culture of transparency beginning from day one. Inquire about what the intern hopes to gain in terms of skills and experience. By being aware of short and long-term goals, you can best meet the needs of your intern. Even if you don't personally have the resources to make the experience exactly what they would like, you are able to help them develop professionally toward their goals.
- **Not setting clear goals and expectations.** Without clear goals and expectations, your intern will not know how to measure his/her success. Through the development of your intern's work plan, and the establishment of team norms and expectations, you will be

able to gauge whether or not your intern is meeting the established goals, and decide if they were realistic for achievement.

- **Not checking in enough/checking in too much.** Every intern will be different from the last, and require different levels of management, but it should be noted that millennials expect more frequent feedback than other generations of employees (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). At the initiation of the internship, establish guidelines for conversation and feedback. Let the intern know what your preferred check-in schedule is with your employees, and allow him/her to do the same. If the established frequency is not working and appears to be too much or too little, adjust the meeting schedule. Be honest with yourself and the intern and encourage him/her to do the same.
- **Providing feedback that is not constructive.** Feedback given should provide your intern with guidance and a direction in which to go. Giving vague feedback does not give the intern an explanation as to why something needs to be changed, and can be difficult to understand. It is your job as intern manager to provide your interns with direction and specific feedback that allows them to problem-solve and produce higher quality work for your organization and team.
- **Forgetting to be a mentor as well as a manager.** It is important to remember that your intern will most likely be new to the workforce, and unfamiliar with the environment. As they gain exposure to a professional environment, they will be behind the curve when it comes to office nuances and normalities. Do not forget to help your intern be successful in soft skill as their first mentor. Coaching your intern with topics such as email etiquette, networking, and organization specific trends can be helpful for your organization, but also allows the intern to develop transferable skills for other professional roles.

General Best Practices

Now that the intern(s) have arrived, the process of onboarding has officially begun! Take a look at the list of best practices designed to continue the cultural integration of your intern(s) past the formal onboarding process.

- **Gather feedback on the formal onboarding process.** If your organization or department does a formal onboarding prior to the intern's first day, compile a list of pros and cons from the experience. Reporting back to the HR Onboarding team benefits the company as well as the interns (and full-time employees) entering the organization. The feedback can be collected in a variety of ways such as a face-to-face meeting or anonymous survey.

- **Get to know your new employee.** You've already planned a welcome lunch or event, now put it into action! Remember that this should not be a "working lunch," but rather take the chance to know the intern as a person, not just an employee. (*6 Tips for Making Interns*, 2010). By taking interest in him/her and showing that you are open as well, the intern will feel more comfortable moving forward.
- **Expand upon your intern's interests if possible.** As you get to know your intern, be sure to take notice of his/her professional interests and goals. Connecting him/her with someone in your organization that does a job they would be interested in is a great way to help them build connections, and for you to see greater potential for a future employee. This can also play a large role in the success of pairing your intern with their current employee mentor during Step 3: Making Connections (Chronus, n.d.).
- **Always be available for questions.** Being an approachable intern manager may seem like common sense, but often this behavior is lost in translation. Try to imagine what it was like for you as a student and how you would have felt in a professional environment. Chances are your intern has limited experience and will be very curious. Be there and approachable for them to ask the "dumb" questions.
- **Give the intern resources.** Although you as a supervisor are a great well of knowledge, your productivity should not be plummeting due to your intern's presence. Introduce a list of resources that the intern may need upfront and answer questions that may be overlooked by an active employee. Direct the intern in the right place, and your time spent answering questions will be minimized. Some questions to consider are listed below, as well as inquiries as to where the intern might find the information.
 - What hours do I work?
 - Is there an employee handbook I can access or obtain?
 - Is flexible scheduling an option?
 - What do I do if I am sick or have car trouble?
 - Am I permitted to call my direct manager on short notice?
 - Is there a lunch hour restriction?
 - Do I clock in and out?
 - Is there a time clock located near my workspace or an online portal to do so on?
 - How do I navigate the company website/intranet?

- Is there a course I could take to learn this information or a tutorial I could view?
 - How do I contact information technology (IT) within the company?
 - Is there a standard format used for all reports?
 - Does my computer have built-in templates?
 - Are formatting guidelines listed somewhere I could easily access or reference?
- **Introduce the intern to company systems.** If there is a computer program or method of completing an action that is company or department specific, let your intern know. If full time employees undergo a system or process training, consider setting up a shortened version for the intern. Remember an internship is all about maximizing the student's professional experience while also increasing company output if possible.
- **Get the intern involved.** Often times, the intern will be eager to begin work, but not quite sure where to start. As a manager, it will be much easier for you to set up some 1:1 or group meetings for your intern with other employees. Let them get to know the team as well as others they may work with to help them get going.
- **Assign one overarching project.** Along with daily tasks, your intern(s) should have (at least) one overarching project for their time with your organization (Mosley, 2013). Although you as the manager will be available for questions and meetings, the intern should be leading this project themselves. This allows for two important goals to be fulfilled: your company can gain productivity and output from the student, and the intern gains soft and technical skills, while having something to add to their resume or portfolio.
- **Set quantifiable weekly goals.** Once you assign the intern his or her project, the scope may appear to be beyond their means. By setting weekly goals that can be measured, both yourself and the intern will have a clear understanding of what appropriate progress looks like. Be sure to monitor the progress of the project, adjusting goals if they seem too ambitious or easy.
- **Meet often.** Don't forget, this intern is under your span of control. They directly report to you as a manager, and you should meet often. Depending on the intern's work load and your schedule, meetings could take place weekly or biweekly, and range from 20 minutes to an hour or two. Not every meeting will look the same, and check-ins via email and phone are perfectly fine, as long as your intern feels supported. Be sure that these meetings are meaningful, and don't just schedule a meeting for the sake of a meeting.

- **Show them the big picture.** One of the worst feelings is when you think your work does not matter to anyone. Explain to your intern where his/her project and tasks fit into the larger company picture (Mosley, 2013). By seeing where the work he or she is completing fits into the organization, the intern will be more motivated and engaged with the assigned work.
- **Don't forget the fun!** Although being an intern manager can seem like a lot of work, the role is a fun one if you allow it to be. An internship should be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved, and your intern is more likely to return to a company he or she *enjoys* working in. Recognize your intern's accomplishments, plan fun, engaging workshops and projects, and treat them as an integral part of your team to see the best results (Mosley, 2013).

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